

Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP)

What is RAMP?

- In November 2017, we launched RAMP with the goal of providing eligible appellants with the earliest possible resolution of their disagreement with VA's decision on their claim.
- RAMP is voluntary and will provide you with the opportunity to enter the new, more efficient review process outlined in the historic *Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017* (Appeals Modernization Act), which the President signed into law on August 23, 2017.
- Under RAMP, you can expect to receive a review of the decision on your claim much faster than if you remain in the legacy appeals process. The program will allow participants the option to have their decisions reviewed in the Higher-Level Review or Supplemental Claim lane outlined in the new law.
- RAMP will run through February 2019, when we plan to fully implement the Appeals Modernization Act. Further, we will continue to process RAMP elections as long as necessary to continue to accelerate resolution of legacy appeals.

RAMP is part of VA's larger Appeals Modernization Plan

- The legacy appeal process, which was set in law, split jurisdiction over appeals in compensation claims between Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), adding more complexity to the appeal process.
- The Appeals Modernization Act establishes a new review process for VA claims that is timely, transparent, and fair, and thus allows us to improve the delivery of benefits and services to you and your family.
- RAMP gives you the opportunity for early participation in the new **Supplemental Claim** and **Higher-Level Review** lanes.

Which Review Lane is Right for You?

Supplemental Claim Lane

- Select this option if you have additional evidence that is *new and relevant* to support granting your benefit claim. VA's goal is to complete these supplemental claims in an average of 125 days.
- We will assist you in gathering new and relevant evidence to support your claim.
- We will review any new and relevant evidence submitted since we last decided your claim.
- If desired, you can continue to submit supplemental claims with new and relevant evidence or use the Higher-Level Review lane after you receive a decision in the Supplemental Claim lane by making an election for further review within one year of the date on your decision notice.

Higher-Level Review Lane

- Select this option if you have no additional evidence to submit in support of your claim but you believe that there was an error in the initial decision. VA's goal is to complete these higher-level reviews in an average of 125 days.
- A higher-level review consists of an entirely new review of your claim by a senior claims adjudicator.
- The Higher-Level Reviewer will only consider evidence that was in VA's possession **at the time you opt-in. You and/or your representative will NOT be able to add new evidence during this process.**
- We cannot assist you in developing additional evidence. However, if the Higher-Level Reviewer discovers an error in our duty to assist in the prior decision, your claim will return to initial decision makers for additional processing to correct the error.
- You or your representative can request an optional one-time telephonic informal conference with the Higher-Level Reviewer to identify specific errors in the case. Requesting an informal conference may cause some delay in the processing of your higher-level review.
- If necessary, you can use the Supplemental Claim lane after you receive a decision in the Higher-Level Review lane, by making an election for further review within one year of the date on your decision notice. However, you will not have immediate access to the Higher-Level Review again after receiving a decision in the Higher-Level Review Lane.

Who is eligible for RAMP?

You are eligible if you have a disability compensation appeal pending in one of the following legacy appeal stages:

- Notice of Disagreement (NOD)
- Form 9, Appeal to Board of Veterans' Appeals
- Certified to the Board but not yet activated for a Board decision
- Remand from the Board to VBA

Those who have been waiting the longest in each of the above appeal stages for a resolution of their appeal will receive a letter giving them the opportunity to participate in RAMP first. Veterans' representatives (Veterans Service Organizations, Attorneys, and claims agents) also have the ability to recommend and or submit a RAMP Opt-in Election form on behalf of a Veteran they represent. We will phase more Veterans into RAMP, eventually inviting almost 350,000 to participate.

Advantages of RAMP

- Early participation in the new, more efficient review process for VA benefit decisions
- Potentially faster decisions and early resolution of disagreements
- Multiple review options (supplemental claim, higher level review, or appeal to the Board after February 2019)
- The same potential effective date for benefits regardless of the review option chosen
- The option to ask for a quick, fresh look at a VA decision by an experienced claims reviewer
- A new requirement that we must have clear and convincing evidence to change any findings favorable to you in a VA decision